

## HOW GOD SPEAKS - Acts 13:1-3 - January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008

- Have you ever wondered how it is that God speaks? - The text before us, reveals to us, how God spoke to the church in Antioch.
- I believe that these first three verses in Acts 13 can show us how it is that God speaks to us now.

- By way of introduction, Luke tells in the previous chapter verse 25 that Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark were all at the church in Antioch.
- They had returned to Antioch after delivering a financial gift of support to the church in Jerusalem. Luke recorded this back in 11:27-30.

**Acts 11:27-30** 27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. NIV

### 1. Through prophets and teachers (Verse 1)

1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

v1 Luke rounds a corner in chapter 13 and focuses on the gentile church in Antioch as opposed to the Jewish church in Jerusalem.

- Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire and now we find the Apostle Paul in the church there, which is really interesting.
- Along with Paul and Barnabas were teachers and prophets as well as Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen. Why list these men by name?

**1. Barnabas**, whose name means son of encouragement, was very wealthy and very giving. He came along side Saul after his conversion when everyone else was afraid of him. (Acts 9:27)

**2. Simeon** who was called Niger, which means black. It's likely that he may have been a black African who was part of the church in Antioch. He may have even been the same Simeon who carried Jesus' cross. (Luke 23:26)

**3. Lucius** was probably led to the Lord by Simon, though we don't know for sure. It is interesting to note that he was probably one of the original evangelists who had come to Antioch from Cyrene. (Acts 11:20)

**4. Manaen** was the foster brother of Herod Antipas, which means that this was the same Herod who beheaded John the Baptist and oversaw one of Jesus' trials. (Luke 23:8-12)

**5. Saul** is none other than the Apostle Paul whom we'll get to know very well in our study of Acts.

**Ephesians 4:11-13** 11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. NIV

### 2. In worshiping and fasting (Verse 2)

2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

v2 While they were ministering to/worshiping the Lord and fasting the Holy Spirit tells them to set apart Barnabas and Saul.

- Both Barnabas and Saul are now going to be called to a specific place for a specific purpose.
- This is revealed while they are worshiping the Lord and fasting.

How did the Spirit say this to them, was it audible? No, it was likely spoken by one of them there with the prophetic gift.

**1 Timothy 4:14** Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

"I do not for a moment imagine that the assembly heard a voice. That is the mistake we too often make. We try to force ourselves into ecstasies in order to hear the voice, then we imagine we hear it!" (Morgan)

### 3. With prayer and laying on hands (Verse 3)

3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

v3 After they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on both Paul and Barnabas and sent them off.

- The laying on of hands was a formal commissioning to a specific ministry. God already ordained them, now man lays hands on them.
- This church in Antioch was seemingly the model church from which all churches would do well to learn from.

1. The Antioch church was a Spirit filled church and was operating in the gifts of the Spirit, namely the gift of prophecy.
2. The Antioch church was a Bible centered church with the emphasis on the teachers teaching the Word of God.
3. The Antioch church was a worshipping church as evidenced by their worshipping of and ministering to the Lord.
4. The Antioch church was a praying church in that they fasted and prayed in order to hear God speak to them.
5. The Antioch church was a strong church in order to survive after setting apart and sending out Paul and Barnabas.
6. The Antioch church was a mission's church that sent out missionaries and resources to fulfill the great commission.
7. The Antioch church was a giving church in that they helped the Jerusalem church financially during hard times.

Closing thoughts to ponder...

- To be set apart or separated for the Lord means that we need to set apart and be separated from something else.
- The Lord seeks those to worship Him. We minister for the Lord only when we first minister to the Lord.
- Conspicuously absent from the narrative is a committee report, marketing survey, or demographic study. It's all by the Holy Spirit.